

26. (New) A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the ratio indicates a number of individuals who have completed a job part task.

27. (New) A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the ratio indicates a number of individuals for whom a job part task period has expired.

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed May 9, 2002, the Examiner noted that claims 1-21 were pending, and rejected all claims. Claims 1-21 have been amended, new claims 22-27 have been added and, thus, in view of the forgoing claims 1-27 remain pending for reconsideration which is requested. No new matter has been added. The Examiner's rejections are traversed below.

Pages 2-6 of the Office Action rejects all claims under 35 U.S.C. sections 102 and 103 over Nakaoka.

Nakaoka is directed to a task execution support system which is directed to helping the workers manage the tasks and particularly provides them information about the tasks while performing the tasks. In particular, Nakaoka, at col. 8, lines 19-24, reads "the task information display/operation unit 1030 provides a user interface to enable the worker to operate task information, allows the worker to operate task information...". Further Nakaoka, in col. 3, line 13 notes that the "...designated task is created/completed..." as progress is made by the worker. Nakaoka, in col. 19, lines 13-19, further notes "Based on the control (task information) of the task information display/operation unit and the event rule driver unit, the information management unit searches task information from the task information memory unit, returns the thus obtained task information to the event rule driver unit, and changes the task information of the task information memory unit".

As can be seen Nakaoka is concerned with a task control system that assumes as a prerequisite a condition under which a user-worker registers a task and inputs an indication notifying the completion of the task.

In contrast to Nakaoka, the present invention provides a way for a job leader to review the progress or status of every member involved in a job and to review the progress on the part(s) of a job assigned to every member. This is done by collectively asking every member about the progress or status on the part of the job using a message and causing

every member to respond to the message. The present invention is different from Nakaoka in that the monitoring and job status response involves a message to the individuals doing the job parts. Nakaoka does not use messages as part of the job monitoring process. For this reason, it is submitted that the present invention is distinguishable over Nakaoka.

The information associated with the message of the present invention indicates whether the person has completed a part of the job. This is another feature not taught or suggested by Nakaoka. Rather, Nakaoka uses an accessible table in fig. 11 listing indications of whether a task is complete, the name of a responsible person and an indication whether any sub-task is associated to for each of the respectively identified tasks concerned. For this further reason, it is submitted that the present invention is distinguishable over Nakaoka.

Because one of the main objectives of the present invention is to enable a job leader managing the execution of a job to review the completion states of all members all members working as a group for a job collectively, the present invention also causes a terminal unit to display a number indicating the ratio of the team members or individuals performing the tasks of a job who have completed the corresponding parts of the job. This feature is also not taught or suggested by the prior art and is another reason the present information distinguishes thereover.

The present claimed invention also allows a user to enter a completion date for a task in response to the message. This feature is also not taught or suggested by the prior art.

It is submitted that the invention of independent claims distinguishes over the prior art and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

The dependent claims depend from the above-discussed independent claims and are patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above. The dependent claims also recite additional features not taught or suggested by the prior art. For example, claims 5, emphasizes that the user can respond to the status message with a completion date other than what is set forth in the message the individual receives about the task. Claims 4 and 20 emphasize the worker can activate a button in the message to indicate status. The present claimed invention also emphasizes that the information provided to the job manager can indicate an opening state of the message (see claim 25), a completion state of the job task of the receiver of the message see claim 25) and the expiration of the term or time period for the job specified by the message (see claim 27). There is nothing in the prior art which teaches or suggests these

features. The other dependent claims include additional patentable distinctions. It is submitted that the dependent claims are independently patentable over the prior art.

It is submitted that the claims are not taught, disclosed or suggested by the prior art. The claims are therefore in a condition suitable for allowance. An early Notice of Allowance is requested.

If any further fees, other than and except for the issue fee, are necessary with respect to this paper, the U.S.P.T.O. is requested to obtain the same from deposit account number 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: 10/9/02

By: [Signature]
J. Randall Beckers
Registration No. 30,358

700 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 434-1500

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8(a)
This correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231
STAAS & HALSEY LLP, 2002

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8(a)

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231

On October 9, 2002
By [Signature]
Date October 9, 2002
STAAS & HALSEY LLP

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Amended) A message processing apparatus, comprising:
an acquisition unit obtaining information indicating [an opening state of a message, information indicating a completion state of a job of a receiver of the message, or information indicating expiration of a term of the job specified by the message] whether each of a plurality of receivers of a message, who in a group do a job associated with the message, has completed an assigned part of the job; and
a control unit [forcibly displaying on a terminal device the information indicating the opening state of the message, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term of the job specified by] , based on the information obtained by the acquisition unit, causing a terminal apparatus to display information indicating a ratio of persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job that is associated with the message.
2. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein [said control unit forcibly displays on the terminal device the information indicating the opening state, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term together with a title of the message when a user issues a display request or a predetermined condition is satisfied] the control unit causes the information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed respectively assigned parts of the job to be displayed together with a title of the message in response to one of a display request of a user and on fulfilling predetermined conditions.
3. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein [said] the control unit causes the terminal [device to forcibly] apparatus to display a completion state table [containing the information indicating the opening state of the message, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term] comprising information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job and the title of the message.
4. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, further

comprising:

a message generation unit generating a message provided with a confirmation button [for notifying from a message receiver to a message transmitter] by which each receiver of the message can individually inform that the receiver has completed [his or her job,] the assigned part of the job to the transmitter of the message; and

wherein [when the message receiver presses the confirmation button, said control unit determines that the receiver has completed his or her job, obtains a number of receivers who have pressed the confirmation button, and, when the number of the receivers who have completed their jobs exceeds a predetermined value, or when all receivers have completed their jobs, allows the information indicating the completion state to be displayed on the terminal device] the control unit judges when the confirmation button is activated by a receiver of the message that the receiver has completed the assigned part of the job and counts the number of receivers who have activated the confirmation button for causing the terminal apparatus to display the information indicating the ratio of the persons having completed the assigned parts of the job.

5. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein: the message comprises a task completion date;

[said] the message generation unit generates a message [containing an input column of an offered term to which a receiver-requested term is input in response to a term specified by] to which attached is an entry space for entering a completion date offer indicating a completion date each receiver desires to agree to in place of the completion date in the message; and

[said] the control unit causes a terminal device of the transmitter [to display the offered term of the receiver input in the input column of the offered term of the message] apparatus at the transmitter of the message to display the completion date offer that is entered in the entry space.

6. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim [2] 1, wherein [said] the control unit causes [a] the terminal [device of] apparatus at the transmitter of the message or [a terminal device of the receiver to forcibly display the information indicating the opening state, the information indicating the completion state, of the information indicating the expiration of the term] at the receiver of the message to mandatory display the information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job

among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job that is associated with the message.

7. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein [said information indicating the opening state and said information indicating the completion state contains a number of receivers who has opened the message, an opening rate, a number of receivers who have completed their jobs, and a completion rate, and displays the information on the terminal device when any of the information exceeds a predetermined value or when the term expires] the control unit causes the terminal apparatus to display the information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed the assigned parts of the job when one of a specified date for completing is a current and when the ratio of the persons who have completed the assigned parts of job reaches a preassigned value.

8. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein [said] the control unit causes the terminal [device] apparatus to display the information indicating the [opening state, or the information indicating the completion state when a current date reaches a date specified by the transmitter] ratio of the persons who have completed the assigned parts of the job on a day specified by a transmitter of the message in advance.

9. (Amended) A message processing apparatus, comprising:
an acquisition unit obtaining information indicating whether each of a plurality of receivers of a message, who in a group do a job associated with the message, has completed an assigned part of the job,

a storage unit storing information [specifying a message, a name of a transmitter, a name of a receiver, and, for each receiver, information indicating an opening state of a message, information indicating a completion state of a job of a receiver of the message, or information indicating expiration of a term of the job specified by the message, said information being stored in association with one another] identifying a message and information indicating a name of a transmitter of the message, a name of a receiver who has completed the assigned part of the job in a mutually associated manner; and

a control unit causes a terminal [device to forcibly display the information indicating the opening state, the information indicating the completion state, or the information indicating the term of the expiration obtained from a specified term and a current date, said information being stored in said storage unit] apparatus display information indicating a ratio of

persons who have completed respectively assigned parts of a job associated with the message among a plurality of receivers of the message.

10. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said control unit causes the terminal apparatus to display an event announcement table containing information relating to a plurality of events.

11. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said control unit generates an event announcement table according to schedules [a schedule of] associated with a plurality of received messages, and announces contents of [an event] to a receiver by instructing a terminal [device] apparatus of the receiver to display the event announcement table.

12. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim [1] 10, wherein [said control unit stores information associating contents of a plurality of events in a time-series multiple level structure with a schedule and entered members as event information, and generates and displays an event announcement table comprising the plurality of events according to the event information when a message is generated.] said control unit stores event information, for each of a plurality of events that take place in a manner distributed in a multiplayer timeline chart, describing about details of each event, time-schedule of each event and participating persons in each event in a mutually associated manner, and generates an plurality of events based on the event information, for displaying the event announcement table when a message is generated.

13. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a message generation unit [setting] attaching an indicator [information] to a confidential message indicating a need of limiting [a] transfer of [a] the confidential message, wherein said control unit limits [the] transfer of the confidential message [for] to which the [information] indicator is attached [limiting the transfer of the confidential message is set].

14. (Amended) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a message generation unit capable of generating a message to which attached is a condition for deleting the [setting a deletion condition of a] message, so that the message which the condition for deleting the message is attached can be deleted automatically based on one of

a certain period after the message being generated and in accordance to the attached condition by an independent act of a transmitter or a receiver of the message [wherein said message for which the deletion condition is set can be arbitrarily deleted by the transmitter or the receiver automatically after a predetermined period or based on the set deletion condition].

15. (Amended) A message processing system constituted from [including] a plurality of terminal [devices] apparatuses each having a [function] capability of displaying a message and a message processing [device] apparatus capable [having a function] of processing the message, wherein [said] the message processing [device] system comprises:

an acquisition unit obtaining information indicating [an opening state of a message, information indicating a completion state of a job of a receiver of the message, or information indicating expiration of a term of the job specified by the message;] whether each of a plurality of receivers of the message, who in a group do a job associated with the message, has completed an assigned part of the job, and

a control unit [forcibly displaying on a corresponding terminal device the information indicating the opening state of the message, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term of the job specified by] , based on the information obtained by the acquisition unit, causing the terminal apparatuses to display information indicating a ratio of persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job that is associated with the message.

16. (Amended) The message processing system according to claim 15, wherein [said] the control unit causes the terminal [device] apparatus to [forcibly] display [on] a completion state table comprising information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job and the title of the message [containing the information indicating the opening state of the message, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term].

17. (Amended) A method of managing messages [message managing method], comprising:

[controlling a terminal device to forcibly display information indicating opening a state of a message, information indicating a completion state of a job of a receiver of the message, or

information indicating expiration of a term specified by the message] obtaining information indicating whether each of a plurality of receivers of a message, who in a group do a job associated with the message, has completed an assigned part of the job; and

based on the obtained information, causing a terminal apparatus to display information indicating a ratio of persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job that is associated with the message.

18. (Amended) The method of managing messages according to claim 17, [wherein said controlling forcibly displays on the terminal device the information indicating the opening state, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term together with a title of the message when a user issues a display request or a predetermined condition is satisfied] further comprises causing the information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed respectively assigned parts of the job to be displayed together with a title of the message in response to a display request of a user or on fulfilling conditions arranged in advance.

19. (Amended) The method of managing messages according to claim 17, wherein [said controlling causes] further comprises causing the terminal [device] apparatus to [forcibly] display a completion state table [containing the information indicating the opening state of the message, the information indicating the completion state of the job of the receiver of the message, or the information indicating the expiration of the term.] comprising information indicating the ratio of the persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job and the title of the message.

20. (Amended) The method of managing messages according to claim 17, [wherein] further comprising [a confirmation button for notifying from a message receiver to a message transmitter that the receiver has completed his or her job is provided in a message, wherein when the message receiver presses the confirmation button, said controlling determines that the receiver has completed his or her job, obtains a number of receivers who have pressed the confirmation button, and, when the number of the receivers who have completed their jobs exceeds a predetermined value, or when all receivers have completed their jobs, allows the information indicating the completion state to be displayed on the terminal device]
generating a message to which attached is a confirmation button by which each receiver

of the message can individually inform that the receiver has completed the assigned part of the job to the transmitter of the message; and,

judging when the confirmation button is activated by a receiver of the message that the receiver has completed the assigned part of the job and counts the number of receivers who have activated the confirmation button for causing the terminal apparatus to display the information indicating the ratio of the persons having completed the assigned parts of the job.

21. (Amended) A computer-readable storage medium for controlling a computer and storing a message management program comprising:

[for directing a computer to forcibly display on a terminal unit, information indicating opening a state of a message, information indicating a completion state of a job of a receiver of the message, or information indicating expiration of a term specified by the message]

a first program part for obtaining information indicating whether each of a plurality of receivers of a message, who in a group do a job associated with the message, has completed an assigned part of the job; and

a second program part, based on the obtained information, for causing a terminal apparatus to display information indicating a ratio of persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job that is associated with the message.

22. (New) A message processing apparatus, comprising:

a message generation unit generating a message to which attached is an entry space for entering a completion date offer indicating a completion date each receiver desires to agree in place of the completion date stated in the message; and

a control unit causing a terminal apparatus to display in a table form the title of the message, names a plurality of the receivers and the completion dates entered into the entry spaces attached to the message by the plurality of the receivers respectively.

23. (New) The message processing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the control unit causes the terminal apparatus to display in a table form information including a ratio of persons who have completed the respectively assigned parts of the job among all the plurality of receivers of the message doing the job that is associated with the message.

24. (New) A method, comprising;

transmitting a message to individuals of a group concerning parts of a job assigned to the individuals;

obtaining information concerning job part completion; and

displaying a ratio indicating a number of individuals of the group who have completed the parts of the job.

25. (New) A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the ratio indicates a number of individuals who have opened the message.

26. (New) A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the ratio indicates a number of individuals who have completed a job part task.

27. (New) A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the ratio indicates a number of individuals for whom a job part task period has expired.